

one of said selected gaming devices upon the occurrence of a predetermined event;

storing the data in a memory connected to a controller associated with only one of the gaming devices;

transmitting data indicative of gaming device activity from the gaming device to the controller;

transmitting a pay command from the controller to the gaming device upon the occurrence of the predetermined event only if a bonus period has been initiated; and paying the bonus via the gaming device responsive to receipt of the pay command.

63. (new) The method of claim 62 wherein the predetermined event comprises a predetermined transaction at the gaming device.

64. (new) The method of claim 63 wherein said predetermined transaction comprises making a wager at the gaming device.

65. (new) The method of claim 63 wherein said predetermined transaction comprises a handle pull at the gaming device.

66. (new) The method of claim 62 wherein providing data establishing criteria to cause a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices upon the occurrence of a predetermined event comprises providing data causing a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices only if predetermined minimum gaming device play is achieved.

67. (new) The method of claim 62 wherein said predetermined event comprises transmission of a pay command from the host computer to the controller.

68. (new) A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

establishing a predetermined minimum level of gaming device play;

detecting wagers made at each of the gaming devices; and  
initiating a bonus period during which gaming devices which exceed the  
minimum level are eligible to be paid a bonus responsive to the occurrence of a predetermined  
event and gaming devices which do not exceed the minimum level are not eligible for such a  
bonus.

69. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein initiating a bonus period comprises  
transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

70. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises:  
using the network to track the amount of money played on the selected gaming  
devices; and  
allocating a predetermined percentage played to a bonus pool.

71. (new) The method of claim 70 wherein the bonus period is initiated after the bonus  
pool exceeds a predetermined level.

72. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein the predetermined event comprises a jackpot  
paid at one of the gaming devices.

73. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein the predetermined event comprises random  
selection of one of the gaming devices.

74. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises paying a  
bonus to a gaming device responsive to a pay command transmitted from the host computer over  
the network.

75. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises:  
storing data defining the predetermined minimum level of gaming device play in  
a memory at the gaming device; and  
comparing the level of gaming device play with the stored data.

76. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further includes indicating to a  
player of the gaming device whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

77. (new) A method of operating gaming devices configured to play a preselected game  
interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

permitting players to play the preselected game at the gaming devices;  
paying to each device in accordance with a payout table stored in the device after  
each game;

monitoring the activity of the gaming devices; [over network]

detecting the amount of money played on the gaming devices;

allocating a predetermined percentage of the money played to a bonus pool;

determining the level of the bonus pool;

initiating a bonus period after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level;

[activating... level]  
[bonus... active]  
permitting continued play of the preselected game at the gaming devices;

continuing to pay to each device in accordance with the payout table after  
initiating the bonus period; and

paying a bonus to at least one of the gaming devices responsive to the occurrence  
of a predetermined event after initiating the bonus period.

78. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further comprises:

detecting the amount of money paid as bonuses on the gaming devices;

modifying the bonus pool by the amount of money paid as bonuses;

determining the level of the bonus pool; and

deactivating the bonus payout table in the gaming device after the bonus pool  
level falls below a turn-off level.

7 79. (new) The method of claim 78 wherein said turn-on level is above said turn-off level.

80. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein initiating a bonus period comprises transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

81. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein the predetermined event comprises a jackpot paid at one of the gaming devices.

82. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein the predetermined event comprises random selection of one of the gaming devices.

83. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein paying a bonus to at least one of the gaming devices comprises paying a bonus to a gaming device responsive to a pay command transmitted from the host computer over the network.

84 81. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further includes:  
defining bonus eligibility criteria; and  
paying a bonus only to gaming devices which meet the criteria.

85 82. (new) The method of claim 81 wherein the criteria comprises a minimum level of gaming device play.

86 83. (new) The method of claim 82 wherein said method further comprises indicating to the player of the gaming device whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

87 82. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further comprises:  
determining the level of play for a gaming device;  
preventing a bonus from being paid to the gaming device when the level of play falls below a predetermined level.